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SUBJECT: THE PNC VIEW OF THE 2008 ELECTION

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: In a recent conversation with Dr. Edward Mahama, the leader of the People's National Convention (PNC) party, Mahama said the PNC supports a greater state role in Ghana's economy, more intense efforts to stamp out corruption and a stronger Parliament. He said plans to reunite the PNC with the Convention People's Party (CPP), which gathered steam after each party was defeated handily in the 2004 election, are ongoing. However, he noted that this effort has been hampered by disagreement over non-substantive issues, including the reunited party's emblem and slogan. Should these parties overcome their differences and unite, it would create a stronger alternative to the two main parties, and would further spice up what promises to be a closely contested 2008 election. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) On October 24, Dr. Edward Mahama, leader of the People's National Convention (PNC), a second tier political party, told poloffs that the PNC supports a robust, state-led economy and, if elected, would pay close attention to resource management and corruption. The PNC, formed in 1992, is based on Nkrumahist ideals similar to the Convention People's Party (CPP), but has played a minor role in Presidential politics to date. Mahama received 3 per cent of the vote in his two previous runs for the Presidency in 1996 and 2000. The PNC holds four seats in Parliament and will elect its candidate for the 2008 election on November 30.

¶3. (SBU) Mahama stressed that Government reform, starting with Parliament, is another pillar of the PNC's platform. Mahama traced the weakness of Ghana's Parliament to a provision in the National Constitution which stipulates that many Ministers of State, appointed by the President, must serve simultaneously as MPs, including the Minister of Parliament, who frequently attempts to control MPs. Parliament, Mahama stressed, must play a stronger role in checking executive power. The PNC's vision, Mahama said, is a multi-party Parliament in which no one party holds the majority. In this case, the Executive Branch would be forced to work with Parliament. As it stands now, he said, the "overbearing" Executive Branch ends up promoting patronage and corruption. Mahama said the "winner-take-all" nature of Ghanaian politics promotes division rather than compromise.

¶4. (SBU) Mahama raised the long discussed merger with the Convention People's Party (CPP), saying that all "genuine Nkrumahists" agree on the need to unite. These talks gained some momentum after both parties' poor showing in the 2004 election, but, according to Mahama and others, the parties continue to disagree about trivial issues, such as the name of the party and what its emblem would be. (NOTE: Other contacts have told us that the emblem and slogan are the only issues preventing the union. END NOTE.) Mahama said talks will continue and he hoped that the CPP would address these issues at its November 24 congress. Mahama said a merger would upstage both the NPP and the NDC.

¶5. (SBU) COMMENT: Dr. Mahama is a pro-American, U.S. trained gynecologist. His musings about Parliament's weakness ring true and we have heard similar sentiments from other MPs. A merger with the CPP would shake up the 2008 election, and makes sense for the two parties, which are philosophically similar. Given the closeness of

the last two elections, an increase in the CPP/PNC share of the vote - by even a few percentage points - could have an impact on the outcome in 2008. However, conversations with officials from both parties seem to indicate that at this point the perceived advantages of a merger are not sufficient to overcome the parties' differences.

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